ABSTRACT
of
Gifted Underachieving Students
An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)
by
Brandon Y. Rolland

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Motivation has been shown to be a key factor in achievement for all students. In dealing with gifted underachieving students it is crucial that we be able to relate motivation to potential. There is a misperception of gifted underachievers as being unmotivated, but review of the literature suggests this is untrue. It is not that they are unmotivated, but that they are not motivated by typical rewards or punishments. Therefore, it is important that teachers and parents understand what does motivate these students.

The school achievement of students depends a great deal on personal relations and on their attitude toward life. They resent being urged to put forth more effort for effort's sake alone. For outstanding achievement, they must respect themselves and the subject to be learned. In general, underachievers usually have a defective image of themselves; they have little or no sense of their potential. They need a vision of what they may become. Their major motivation must come from within, from a clear picture of their most acceptable self (Strang, 1960). As Buchanan (1991) stated, "A sage once observed if you do not know where you are going, it is highly unlikely that you will get there."

The United States has about five million "gifted" children. These children typically score from 125 to 180 on IQ tests, ranking in the top five to seven percent of the population, and perform anywhere from one and a half to three grade levels above their peers (O'Connor, 1983a).

In certain secondary schools from seven to forty-seven percent of the students who are intellectually superior are underachievers (Strang, 1960). Gifted underachievers need to develop satisfactory work habits and need to be challenged. Good work habits developed during preschool years help to prevent underachievement later (Strang, 1960). Without challenge, academically gifted students generally become so bored and disillusioned that the damage is irreparable (O'Connor, 1983a). The program manager for the Office of Gifted/Talented Education at the State Department of Education concludes, "Like all children, the gifted need to be challenged and to enjoy learning at a level that works for them" (Corn, 1990).

There are various definitions of giftedness (Corn, 1990). Perino and Perino (1978) define giftedness as "having the potential to achieve eminence and/or produce something of lasting social value." Renzulli (1978) believes that giftedness is multidimensional. He suggests that those who have above average intelligence, high creativity, and substantial task commitment should be considered gifted. In 1972, Marland offered the following definition of the gifted and talented:

> Gifted and talented children are those identified by professionally qualified persons who, by virtue of outstanding abilities, are capable of high performance. These are the children who require

> differentiated educational programs and/or services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program in order to realize their contributions to self and society (Correll, 1978).

Common to all of these definitions, individuals are very bright and demonstrate their high intellectual abilities by scoring well on tests of intelligence, learning more quickly than their peers, and applying complex thinking skills. Their academic achievement is significantly higher than their classmates'. These individuals also tend to become leaders (Smith & Luckasson, 1992).

Defining giftedness is one thing; finding children who fit the criteria is much trickier. Although most schools with gifted programs identify the children through a variety of standardized tests along with teacher and parent evaluations, many gifted students still fall through the cracks by performing poorly on the tests they are given (Corn, 1990). The many factors and variables which can cause or contribute to underachievement make it difficult to generalize about the "typical" underachiever (Greene, 1986).

One common source of underachievement is learning problems. Children who cannot learn efficiently must function at a level below their potential. Poor skills in reading, math, writing, organization, and studying, as well as a lack of concentration, can pose seemingly insurmountable obstacles to achievement (Greene, 1986).

A second source of underachievement is emotional problems. Children who are experiencing emotional turmoil are seldom able to work at a level equal with their potential. Fear, insecurity, anger, and depression divert the emotional energy required for achievement. Unhappy children who are in conflict with themselves seldom possess the self-esteem and self-confidence requisite to achievement (Greene, 1986).

Another source of underachievement is cultural influence. Certain subcultures do not provide support systems that encourage traditional achievement. For example, children who belong to gangs rarely achieve at the same level as children who have joined the science club or the school newspaper in high school. Children from poverty-stricken ghettos may also lack realistic role models for "traditional" achievement. It depends on the student's perspective as to what they feel they can get out of life. If they feel that it is futile to establish goals and to strive for success, they will either accept underachievement or nonachievement as their fate in life or will strive for those symbols of achievement that are realistic in their subculture (Greene, 1986).

The fourth source of underachievement is family problems. The child who experiences dissension and stress at home will most likely have difficulty functioning efficiently in school. The strain created by family problems is carried to the classroom and can interfere with academic achievement.

Emotionally charged conflicts at home distort children's perspectives about themselves and their ability. The environment that parents create at home plays a vital role in determining whether or not a child's potential will be developed and eventually produce achievement. For example, the effects of a messy divorce or a bitter child custody proceeding generally manifest themselves in school and on the playground (Greene, 1986).

Underachievement is defined as a discrepancy between the children's school performance and some index of their actual ability, such as intelligence, achievement, creativity scores, or observational data (Davis & Rimm, 1989). Therefore, an underachiever is a child whose academic performance is below what one would expect based on their age, grade, and IQ (Perino, 1981). Another way to look at how to characterize an underachiever is described by Ginott (1972). "An underachiever sees every obstacle as a stop sign that cannot be side-stepped -- only embraced and leaned on for support."

Generalized underachievement is one of the three basic forms of underachievement. It is when students function at a level below their potential in many areas of their lives. The students may have athletic ability, academic ability, and/or artistic ability, yet fail to perform to their potential. Although some students may "get by," they seldom excel. Typically, parents and teachers attribute this underachievement to laziness, irresponsibility, or

insufficient motivation.

The second basic form of underachievement is selective underachievement. It is where the students develop their ability in one or more areas, but function marginally in other areas. The students may choose to perfect their musical skills because they have natural musical talent, but avoid athletics or specific academic subjects because the students lack natural facility or interest in these subjects.

Nonachievement is the last basic form of underachievement. The nonachieving students typically have poor academic skills, poor social skills, and low self-esteem. The problems of the nonachieving students are often compounded by irresponsibility. This self-defeating behavior functions as a psychological defense mechanism. The chronically irresponsible students are attempting to protect themselves from frustration and failure. The defense mechanism offers little protection; it simply guarantees continued failure. The students do not perceive this paradox. Before the nonachieving students will risk establishing goals and seeking success, the learning and/or emotional problems must be resolved (Greene, 1986).

Underachievement in gifted individuals is probably one of the most important problems in education of the gifted. In one sense, the movement to gifted and talented education is addressing itself to the issue of underachievement--both in working with the individual gifted underachiever and in trying to make sure that we get the most out of those gifted

and talented individuals who are already trying to achieve. The gifted movement is trying to ensure that gifted children are given every opportunity to develop to their potential and not drift into underachievement because of educational circumstances beyond their control (Perino, 1981).

Surprisingly, many students are motivated not by strong needs to succeed, but by strong needs to avoid failure. And when failure threatens, any of several defense mechanisms may be used to ward off threats to their self-esteem (Davis and Rimm, 1989). "Words of praise fail to motivate an underachiever. In his eyes he is inferior" (Ginott, 1972). Gifted children often go out of their way to be inconspicuous, avoid answering questions in class or even making poor grades so they will "fit in," according to experienced teachers (O'Connor, 1983b).

> Some children choose to underachieve because of social pressure. A teenager may identify with a certain peer group that rejects academic achievement. His friends may value sports, motorcycles, surfing, or fast cars and have little respect for those who study and strive to achieve academically. If a bright, academically capable child wants to be accepted by a non-academically-oriented group, he may feel compelled to underachieve (Greene, 1986).

Whitmore (1986) emphasized that gifted underachievers are not "lazy" or "unmotivated" individuals but are merely unmotivated for schoolwork. These students have set different priorities. Underachievement syndrome among gifted children may have been caused by complex family and school situations, but it nonetheless is critical to be certain that children understand the relationship between effort and outcome. A good way to understand this relationship is to look at the characteristics of underachieving gifted students (Davis & Rimm, 1989).

Underachieving gifted students have a wide range of characteristics which identify them. These students typically perform poorly on tests, turn in incomplete or poorly done daily work, achieve at or below grade-level expectations in one or all of the basic skill areas, and evidence low self-esteem tendencies to withdraw or be aggressive in the classroom. In addition, the students characteristically have a superior comprehension and retention of concepts when interested, a vast gap between qualitative levels on oral and written work, and have a wide range of interests and possibly special expertise in an area of investigation (Davis & Rimm, 1989). Terman and Oden (1947) comment in their study,

> Gifted children do not fall into a single pattern but into an infinite variety of patterns. One can find within the group of individual examples

> of almost every type of personality defect, social maladjustment, behavior problem, and physical frailty; the only difference is that among gifted children the incidence of these deviations is, in varying degrees, lower than in the general population.

Characteristics that are found in some, but not all gifted underachieving students, include the students being creative with a vitality of imagination, having an exceptionally large repertoire of factual knowledge, and showing initiative in pursuing self-selected projects at home. The students dislike practice work or drill for memorization and mastery, are easily distracted, and are unable to focus attention and concentrate efforts on tasks. They generally have an indifferent or negative attitude toward school and resist teacher efforts to motivate or discipline the students' behavior in class. In addition, the students seem to avoid trying new activities to prevent imperfect performances, evidence perfectionism or self-criticism, tend to set unrealistic self-expectations with their goals being set too high or too low, and are persistently dissatisfied with the work they have accomplished. The students typically do not function comfortably or constructively in a group of any size, have difficulty in peer relationships, maintain few friendships, and generally show acute sensitivity and perceptions related

to self, others, and life in general (Davis & Rimm, 1989).

Strang (1960) observes that gifted children have one problem that generally receives more attention than any other. Strangely enough, that problem is typically underachievement. The underachieving gifted children may show their lack of interest in school in any number of different ways. They daydream, get into mischief, or defy authority.

The characteristic found most often and consistently among underachieving children is low self-esteem (Fine and Pitts, 1980; Rimm, 1984; Whitmore, 1980). Not believing themselves actually capable of accomplishing what their family or teachers expect of them, they may mask their low self-esteem with displays of bravado, rebellion, or with highly protective defense mechanisms (Covington & Beery, 1976; Fine & Pitts, 1980; Rimm, 1986b). For example, they may openly criticize the quality of the school or the talents of individual teachers, or else claim that they "don't care" or "didn't really try" in regard to a mediocre test score or class grade.

Related to their low self-esteem is their sense of low personal control over their own lives (Rimm, 1986b). If they fail a task, they blame their lack of ability; if they succeed, they may attribute their success to luck. Thus, they may accept responsibility for failure, but not for success (Felton & Biggs, 1977).

This attribution process in educational achievement has

been related to the original theory of learned helplessness by Seligman (1975). If children do not see a relationship between their efforts and the outcome of these attempts, they are likely to exhibit characteristics of learned helplessness and will no longer make an effort to achieve. This pattern is typical of many gifted underachievers. Weiner (1974, 1980) also emphasized that children's subsequent performance will be strongly influenced by whether they attribute successes and failures to ability, effort, task difficulty, or luck. Especially, attributing success to effort leads to further effort, while attributing success to task ease or luck does not (Davis & Rimm, 1989).

"Self-hate destroys, self-esteem saves" (Ginott, 1972). Low self-esteem leads the underachiever to nonproductive avoidance behaviors both at school and at home, secondary characteristics of underachievement (Whitmore, 1980). For example, underachievers may avoid making a productive effort by asserting that school is irrelevant and that they see no reason to study material for which there is no use. Students may further assert that when they are really interested in learning, they can do very well. "Children can be lured into learning. They can be tempted and hooked on it; but they cannot be shamed into it. When forced to study, children use their ingenuity to get through school without learning" (Ginott, 1972).

Avoidance behaviors protect underachievers from admitting their lack of self-confidence, or worse, the feared

lack of ability. If the students studied, they would risk confirming their possible shortcomings to themselves and to others. If they do not study, they can use the nonstudying as a rationale for the failure, thus protecting their valuable feelings of self worth (Covington & Beery, 1976; Davis & Rimm, 1989).

Additional defensive behaviors using avoidance techniques operate in a similar fashion to protect underachievers include intense interest or even leadership in out-of-school activities which are less threatening. These successes essentially compensate for academic failures (Davis & Rimm, 1989).

Extreme rebellion against authority, particularly school authority, provides another route to protect the underachievers. The students seem eager to tell teachers, the principal, the superintendent, even the board of education, exactly how they ought to run the school. Faulting the school helps the underachievers avoid the responsibility of achieving by blaming the system (Davis & Rimm, 1989).

Expectations of low grades and perfectionism, though apparent opposites, also serve as defense mechanisms for the underachieving children with low self-esteem. If the underachiever expects low grades, they lower the risk of failure. Note that low goals are consistent with a poor self-image and a low self-confidence. On the other hand, perfectionism provides a different protection. Since

perfection is unachievable, it provides the children with a ready excuse for poor performance. For example, students can assert with bravado that they set their goals higher than most people, so of course they cannot be expected to always succeed. The students thus provide a rationale for failure and do not need to label themselves as incompetent (although they may indeed feel incompetent). By contrast, achieving children set realistic goals which are reachable and failures are constructively used to indicate weaknesses needing attention (Davis & Rimm, 1989).

Because underachieving children avoid effort and achievement to protect their precarious self-esteem, tertiary characteristics arise which support the pattern of underachievement. These include deficient school-related skills (Fine & Pitts, 1980), poor study habits, peer acceptance problems, poor school concentration, and home and school discipline problems. It is critical to recognize that these tertiary indicators of underachievement are the visible, "tip of the iceberg," characteristics that mainly result from secondary avoidance behaviors. These protect the underachievers from the primary problem, low self-esteem and the related feelings of low personal control (Davis & Rimm, 1989). Among other factors,

> too high and unrealistic aspiration levels by proud and pushing parents for intellectual achievement in their children, deflating teachers, and the

> presence of an older and more competent brother or sister often make children uncertain of their abilities and lead to the strain of competitive intellectual driving or to inhibited and bound use of abilities, or to defensive lack of effort or misbehavior in class so that others wouldn't detect this misperceived 'dumbness.' (MacFarlane, 1957)

Underachievement, which may be owing to many causes, is likely to block the development of self-confidence and security. Children may not receive enough appreciation (Strang, 1960). The need to achieve can impose a heavy burden on children. Although potentially capable children have many advantages, they are often on the receiving end of a great deal of pressure. Parents and teachers tend to raise their level of expectations when they perceive untapped talent in children. Sometimes they over react and establish a standard of performance which is excessive and unreasonable (Greene, 1986).

Potentially capable children are expected to achieve, and their accomplishments are usually closely monitored. Should their performance slip, they become the immediate object of attention and concern. "While the high expectations of parents and teachers can be an inspiration, they can also be the source of serious emotional stress" (Greene, 1986). If parents overemphasize achievement

children may conclude that achievement is the price they must pay for their parents' continual love. If they lose their love, there is no longer any need to try (Strang, 1960).

Supportive strategies are those which affirm the worth of children in the classroom and convey the promise of greater potential and success; yet to be discovered messages of the classroom environment communicate to children promises of belonging, finding acceptance, being affirmed as valued and respected members of the group and being free to become the person they wish to become -- to realize their potential and develop their gifts (Whitmore, 1980).

Most often, the gifted students develop those gifts. People's history of success inspires confidence in their abilities, a sense of responsibility for their actions, and feelings of control over their environment. When failure occurs, it typically is attributed to lack of effort, not lack of ability. Failures therefore may be used constructively to evaluate shortcomings and prepare for the next time (Davis & Rimm, 1989). "The person has temporarily fallen short of a goal, and has not fallen short as a person" (Covington & Beery, 1976).

There will be no humiliation or destroyed self-esteem due to poor performance if students do not really try. If the fear-of-failure student accidentally scores high on a test or paper there is a bonus. Doing well without trying is clear evidence of extra-high ability, thus reinforcing the underachieving pattern. In college, defensive underachieving

produces the "gentleman's C" syndrome. An effortless "C" maintains the illusion of intellectual superiority without testing the scholar's actual abilities (Davis & Rimm, 1989).

Defensive goal-setting can take several forms. A student may set a goal too high--for example, at the "A+" level--because it is no disgrace to fall short of such an impossibly high goal. Vice versa, the goal may be set too low. A low goal guarantees success, but it is a trivial and meaningless one (Davis & Rimm, 1989).

It's already been noted that excuses can protect the delicate ego of fear-of-failure students. Failures are attributed to external causes, not internal ones. Such students may blame anything and everything; for example, "The test was unfair," "My cat chewed up my assignment," or "I wasn't feeling well this morning." Ironically, these students may not accept credit for successes either, since success implies the ability and obligation for continued quality work (Davis & Rimm, 1989).

One recommended solution to these self-defeating, self-perpetuating defense mechanisms is individualized instruction (Covington & Beery, 1976). By engaging fear-of-failure students in independent-learning assignments and projects, success is redefined in terms of meeting and exceeding one's own standards, not publicly competing with others for scarce classroom rewards and recognition. According to Covington and Beery, when students are not forced to compete they will set reachable, realistic goals,

and these provide both the best challenge and the best conditions for a satisfying success (Davis & Rimm, 1989). In addition, Ginott (1972) believes that "underachievers improve when they have the opportunity to tutor. In the process of helping, the helper is helped most. They are motivated to do their best."

Motivation is a concept clouded with even more perplexity and doubtful meaning than many other educational terms well known for their ambiguity or obscurity of meaning (Frymier, 1974). Motivation, like learning itself, cannot be separated from the individual person (Ericksen, 1974).

Motivation is usually defined as the inner stimulus that causes people to be energized and directed in their behavior. Motivation can be explained in many different ways. It can be explained as a person's traits (a need to succeed, a need not to fail, a great interest in a topic), and it can be explained as a temporary state of mind (a test or class presentation tomorrow, a passing interest in the topic). It can also be the internal incentives that are influenced by previous success or failure. Differences in motivation may account for differences in the ways people approach tasks and differences in their success with those tasks (Smith & Luckasson, 1992). Frymier (1974) agrees that motivation is a sticky notion to try to reduce to a simple definition.

Frymier goes on to say that many teachers conceive of motivation as "the practical art of applying incentives and arousing interest for the purpose of causing a pupil to

perform in a desired way." Some would add that it implies "the act of choosing study materials of such a sort and presenting them in such a way that they appeal to the pupils' interests and cause them to attack the work at hand willingly and to complete it with sustained enthusiasm" (Frymier, 1974).

Other school professionals use the word to designate the use of various devices such as the offering of rewards or an appeal to the desire to excel (Frymier, 1974). But Ericksen (1974) believes that a teacher's crutch-like dependency on extrinsic lures and threats for motivating learning ignores the intellectual curiosity of his students, their desire to understand, and their need for self-esteem. These symbolic rewards and punishments exert control over behavior and are learned. Students become extremely sensitive to the nodding head, the accepting smile, or the raised eyebrow.

The achievement motivation, a strong desire to compete successfully against a standard of excellence, and the motive to avoid failure, a strong predisposition to experience shame or humiliation when one fails, have both been studied in some detail in the school setting (O'Connor, 1964). Students who had been classified as being highly motivated toward achievement solve more realistic goals for themselves than subjects low in achievement motive. Those subjects who could best be described as wanting to avoid failure solve fewer problems, persist less after failure, and set less realistic goals than subjects who are low in this motive (Ericksen,

1974).

Perceptions of high ability are a primary activator of achievement behavior. Students become motivated to succeed not only for personal and social benefits, but also because success enhances a reputation for the ability to achieve. If success becomes unlikely, Covington and Beery (1976) theorize that the first priority is to act in ways that minimize the implication that the student lacks ability. Ranging from academic apathy to setting impossibly high goals, these behaviors can be seen as strategies useful to students in their struggle to protect fragile feelings of self-worth.

Apathy is a way for many students to avoid a sense of failure. Those behaving from this motive approach each new learning experience with apprehension and fear -- often masked with apathy, aloofness, or indifference (Raffini, 1988). Negative motives such as fear and anxiety are quickly learned (Ericksen, 1974). Pervasive, mysterious, and often avoided, the concepts of fear and anxiety remain aspects of motivation about which teachers ought to know much more (Russell, 1971).

The student's philosophy toward school becomes "Nothing ventured, nothing failed." Teachers and parents worry that they are unmotivated. In reality, they are highly motivated to protect their sense of self-worth. As they get older they begin to reject education completely. If they state publicly that school is a valueless, boring waste of time, then their self-worth is protected when they receive a failing grade.

These students have discovered that it is less painful to reject school than to reject themselves (Raffini, 1988).

The use of norm-referenced evaluation teaches many students that to be successful in school is to be above average. Placement into that limited group, however, requires from the student both ability and effort. All students are capable of much or little effort; each person is the sole determinant of how much to expend on any given task (Raffini, 1988).

For all ages of students, motivation is a critical factor in school performance. No matter how supportive the parents or how dedicated the teacher, without the cooperation of the student, learning cannot occur. Motivation also affects how well the student pays attention in class, how much effort he/she puts into assignments, and the importance the student attaches to doing well and to learning the material. Many highly gifted and creative children have learning styles that are incompatible with prevailing instructional methods. Furthermore, the level of instruction may be inappropriate for these students and the restrictions on learning in the classroom discourage their full participation (Allyn and Bacon, 1980).

Motivation is affected by events outside the classroom. One strong motivator is the importance parents place on education and whether they communicate this to the child. Parents demonstrate their support when they establish ground rules for homework and provide the necessary help to ensure

homework is completed (Gonder, 1991).

Gonder (1991) also believes that when teachers operate from a belief that all students can learn, and maintain high expectations for all of them, the majority of students will learn to their potential. Teachers are the most influential determiners of student motivation (Russell, 1971).

Motivation is also affected by peer group values and the student's interests outside school. But equally powerful are the student's and teacher's expectations and the efforts both bring to class (Gonder, 1991). A person's peer group can have a profound effect on what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior. Obviously, some students tie into peer groups where achievement is highly valued. They support and help each other. Others, however, are caught up in peer groups where some types of achievement are disdained. Some are even harassed by their peers for working too hard and setting an example that others don't want to work hard enough to achieve (Gonder, 1991).

Ausubel (1963) states that frequently, the best way of inspiring unmotivated pupils is to ignore their motivational state for the time being and concentrate on teaching them as effectively as possible. Much to their surprise and to their teacher's, they will learn despite their lack of interest; and from the satisfaction of learning, they will characteristically develop the ability to learn more.

Motivation to learn, according to Brophy (1986), is a particular kind of human motivation. It may be viewed as

either a temporary state or a permanent trait. People's readiness to be motivated changes and we hope that as young people grow older and more mature, they will demonstrate more and more responsible behavior at home and in school. Brophy explains that the two types of motivations to learn are motivation as a trait and motivation as a state. Motivation as a trait is an enduring disposition to value learning as a worthwhile and satisfying activity, a striving for knowledge and mastery in learning situations, while motivation as a state is a condition of motivation guided by a goal or intention. Students reveal motivation to learn when they complete assignments or lessons.

Everyone is motivated, but not with the same intensity or toward the same goals. We each respond differently to the attempts of others to motivate us. Some individuals accept these attempts more readily than others. For each person, motivation, like bathing, is a daily process. It must be done often for the best results. It becomes a habit--not necessarily of doing more, but of doing things differently.

Self-motivation must be practiced in order for it to become a habit. Educators and parents can assist students to learn to help and motivate themselves by helping them clarify their needs, choose and seek their goals, and learn how other achievers reach their goals. Parents and educators cannot--nor should they--do the job of motivation for the students (Brophy, 1986).

Teachers, parents, and students can work together to

encourage the student's motivation, but this requires involvement and commitment by everyone. Ideally, the student and teacher develop a plan. Parents monitor due dates and impose consequences and sanctions for lack of progress as appropriate (Grossnickle, 1989). Students need to work in an environment that is systematic and predictable. Teachers and parents can provide more structure and organize the day more carefully as well as help these students learn to structure their lives themselves. These students need more careful instruction (Smith & Luckasson, 1992).

For example, parents and teachers can insist that students have a written planning process before tackling reports, term papers, and other major projects. Ultimately, the long-term goal is for students to establish and follow up on their own internal planning process. Some external "short-term" structure and organization may be necessary as they develop new "habits" (Grossnickle, 1989).

Students have a hard time being motivated if they are not organized. To be organized, they must know how to manage their time wisely. Therefore, one of the most practical devices for organizing time and becoming self-motivated in school and at home is a pocket calendar or a daily diary. Students can use the calendar to record special events, target dates for goal completion, major assignments, test days, work schedules, etc. Practicing the skills of time management requires a daily routine that prevents missed deadlines, procrastination by "amnesia", convenient

forgetting, and the like. Maintaining a "to do" list is also a good habit for students to practice as soon as possible. Items on the list should be placed in order of priority. In addition, an assignment notebook ensures availability of clear directions and assignments. The calendar may be carried with the assignment notebook.

Parents and/or educators may also consider sitting down with the students to identify their perceived motivators and to discuss and analyze whether these motivators seem to be extrinsic (outside) or intrinsic (inside). Eventually, the majority of motivation should come from within (Grossnickle, 1989). Self esteem is enhanced by demonstrating to oneself the ability to interact with and to cope with a personal, social, or educational problem (Ericksen, 1974). In school, students believe that personal worth depends largely on accomplishments (Covington & Beery, 1976). Underachievers who are gifted need specialized educational services to teach them how to achieve in school, how to approach learning tasks more meaningfully and how to use their talents in a directed fashion (Smith & Luckasson, 1992).

Classroom research and the success of good teachers has yielded many practical tips on the most effective ways to motivate students: Make curriculum interesting, demonstrate enthusiasm, present information with intensity, state learning objectives at the outset, add variety and playfulness, induce curiosity, encourage student responses, plan for success, give positive reinforcement, correct in a

positive way, encourage risk taking, and make the abstract concrete, personal, or familiar (Gonder, 1991).

Grossnickle (1989) suggests that teachers and parents avoid faulty praise or patronizing, use of fear and threats, punishment, overuse of cliches, overstating failure, namecalling, nagging, blaming, or placing guilt. In addition, put-downs, comparisons, expecting too much or too little, making excuses, and ignoring or denying the warning signs of learning problems should be avoided.

Classroom conditions favorable for some students may be unfavorable for others. It is imperative that all teachers become more perceptive toward their students and make the appropriate adjustments in light of these motivational differences in verbal ability and academic background (Ericksen, 1974). Most educators take pride in their contributions to the winners; few acknowledge responsibility for the losers (Raffini, 1988).

There are several things that parents can do to help at home. (1) Discover your child's learning style. One may want privacy to write a paper, while another may need to "talk through" the subject before getting started. (2) Be goal-oriented. Get your children to dream of a better future. (3) Stress importance of homework. Provide a lighted, comfortable space for homework and be sure it has priority. Homework should take precedence over television and telephone calls. (4) Don't tolerate absences and tardiness. It's difficult to teach students who aren't at

school. (5) Help children learn from their mistakes. Focus on the positive and go forward. (6) Find each child's special gifts and use them as a basis for success. (7) Teach with television. Help your child watch a program with a discriminating eye, anticipating plot changes or contrasting characters (Gonder, 1991).

"Do you have any homework?" That is probably the most frequently repeated communication between students and their parents. What can parents do to get their students to do their homework on their own? Grossnickle (1989) suggests that parents discuss and refresh the commonly stated purposes of homework. Review the material they learned that day and encourage independent trial and error that only the students can do. Extend the classroom by requiring time and attention to creativity. Provide the stimulation intellectually and aesthetically to set the stage to encourage and create an inviting study environment.

Be specific when inquiring about homework. Assume the student has work to do and discuss it subject by subject. Pay attention to what the students are doing, show interest and support. Avoid edicts on time, such as "You will sit there for an hour." Keep from making homework a punishment. Encourage and affirm the students as they work; praise their efforts.

Be careful when checking to ensure that the homework is done. This can divert the task to simply getting it done to patronize mom and dad. But, don't back off completely and

turn the job of completing homework over to them. Avoid extremes of being overly involved or uninvolved. Don't encourage dependency. When students become frustrated, be there to support them but don't fall into the trap of doing their homework for them.

Make it your business to know homework guidelines in each class and what students can do when they don't understand something or how to obtain help. Limit television viewing time. This forces the students to plan their time. Establish a regular time and place for home study; take a stand on the value of studying.

Occasionally allow students to study with friends, as it is one means of encouraging studying. However, in most cases it should not be an everyday occurrence. Do not allow homework to become the source of chronic argument, conflict, fighting, or nagging. This will result in an unproductive, antagonistic relationship between parent and student. Develop a mutually agreeable study schedule, monitor student achievement of stated goals. Be consistent. Model reading by bringing the family together for short periods of quiet reading.

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